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## *House of Representatives*

### **International Megan's Law**

Mr. SMITH of New Jersey. Mr. Speaker, I thank Chairman Royce for yielding me this time, and I thank him for his leadership and for marking this bill up in the last Congress. We went through it in regular order. Chairman Royce, Eliot Engel, and staff were outstanding.

I also want to thank Bob Goodlatte, who has been a very strong proponent of this legislation, as well as Albio Sires, who is the chief Democratic sponsor, and our other cosponsors: Mrs. Hartzler, Carolyn Maloney, Mrs. Wagner, Mr. Pittenger, Mr. Poe of Texas, Ms. McCollum, and Mr. Yoho.

Mr. Speaker, there is no higher duty or responsibility of government than to protect children from violence and predatory behavior. We have a duty to protect the weakest and the most vulnerable.

The International Megan's Law to Prevent Demand for Child Sex Trafficking, H.R. 515, will protect children from child sex tourism by notifying destination countries when convicted pedophiles plan to travel. And to protect American children, the bill encourages the President to use bilateral agreements and assistance to establish reciprocal notification so we will know when convicted child sex offenders are coming here.

Mr. Speaker, I actually got the idea of International Megan's Law in a conversation with a Trafficking in Persons delegation from Thailand during a meeting in my office in 2007. I asked the Thai officials what would they do if we were to notify them of travel by a convicted pedophile. Each of the dozen officials said they would bar entry into their nation of such a predator.

Today will mark the third time in 8 years that this bill has passed the House—and I do hope it will pass—with strong support from both sides of the aisle, the second in its present, more streamlined form. The only change in this version is an additional clause in 8(c) underscoring the fine investigatory work of the Department of Homeland Security in the area of child exploitation and Congress' support for its continuance in Angel Watch, as well as in the investigations of the Cyber Crimes Center.

This provision is not intended to supersede notification requirements elsewhere in the bill.

I am encouraged that the Senate has signaled its support and willingness to improve commonsense U.S. procedures preventing the sex trafficking of children by high-risk predators. I look forward to working with our colleagues in the other body.

Mr. Speaker, child sex predators thrive on secrecy, a secrecy that allows them to commit heinous crimes against children. In 1994, a young girl from my district was lured into the home of a convicted pedophile who lived across the street from her. Megan Kanka, 7, was raped and murdered. No one, including Megan's parents, knew that their neighbor had been convicted of child sexual assault. The outrage over this tragedy led to the enactment of Megan's Laws—public sex offender registries—in every State in the country.

It is imperative that we take the lessons we have learned on how to protect our children from known child sex predators within our borders and expand those protections globally.

Mr. Speaker, a deeply disturbing 2010 report by the GAO, entitled "Current Situation Results in Thousands of Passports Issued to Registered Sex Offenders," found that at least 4,500 U.S. passports were issued to registered sex offenders in fiscal year 2008 alone.

Meanwhile, law enforcement and media reports continue to document Americans on the U.S. sex offender registries who were caught sexually abusing children in East Asia, Central and South America, and elsewhere in the world. It is the same horror movie replayed over and over.

Homeland Security's Angel Watch program has been doing an outstanding job in alerting countries about potential danger from American sex offenders. H.R. 515 would codify and streamline this excellent program, ensuring that actionable information about child sex offender travel actually gets to the

destination country in time for those countries to assess the potential dangers and respond appropriately, whether that is to allow entry, deny entry or a visa, monitor travel, or limit travel. Once notified, nations are empowered to take protective action.

International Megan's Law also directs the President to include guidance in diplomacy, training, and technical assistance abroad on how other countries can create their own public or private sex offender registries similar to what we have in the United States, and how we can use these registries to alert the United States when a child sex offender is intending to travel here to abuse our children. The goal is reciprocity, reciprocal notice to protect children at home and abroad from known sex offenders.

I personally have spoken to foreign officials and nongovernment representatives who have asked me when the United States Congress is going to do something about American sex offenders who are traveling to their country to rape their children. I hear this especially in the developing world. H.R. 515, the International Megan's Law to Prevent Demand for Child Sex Trafficking, is a serious response to that question.

I would also point out parenthetically, as the Special Representative for Combating Trafficking at the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe's Parliamentary Assembly last year, we got passed a resolution calling for this kind of noticing country to country so the secrecy is taken out of sex tourism designed to exploit and abuse children.

I urge Members to support the bill.